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# **Integrative motivation and second language learning: the role of integrative motivation among ESOL learners at a Scottish college**

## **Abstract**

Recent research studies have identified among learners a need to use English in everyday life as an important motivation for the second language (L2) learners. This article reviews the role of integrative motivation among overseas learners learning English at New College Lanarkshire, a further education college based in Scotland. The article discusses the role of integrative motivation in second language learning and examines the nature of the relationship between integrative motivation and L2 learning. The study engages students of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), who have various levels of English and represent diverse backgrounds, in online questionnaires. The responses received from the learners pertaining to their integrative motivation provide valuable insight into not only their academic needs, but also their career related and social needs.

## **Introduction**

Recent research studies have identified the desire to use English in everyday life as an important motivation for L2 learners (Schellekens 2007). Some also wish to learn about, and be a part of, English speaking culture (Cook 2001). This suggests that motivation is intrinsic to English language learning and that integrative motivation may play a big part in their second language learning experience. Integrative motivation has been described as the desire to learn a target language in order to become part of one's host language community (Ur 2012) and culture (Hedge 2000, Ellis 1997, Cook 2001). However, learners' motives for joining an English class in the UK can vary (Paton & Wilkins 2009). Some may have lived in the UK for some time, but have been unable to attend L2 classes for family or personal reasons, or because of issues related to their work. Therefore, their degree of motivation might differ from those new to the L2 culture.

The study took place in New College Lanarkshire in 2015. I was then an ESOL lecturer and I taught all levels of ESOL to students based both in the college and in community centres. Having the opportunity to meet learners from around the world motivated me to learn more about their reasons for coming to the UK and learning English. I was particularly curious what motivates them to learn English, and whether they feel motivated by something that happens inside or outside the classroom; whether they are motivated by something personal or practical. This study examines the nature of the relationship between integrative motivation and second language learning, to establish whether integration into English speaking society motivates learners to learn English. The study offers a discussion of current research and opinions on this subject in the literature review. It also examines the results obtained from the questionnaire survey, presenting an analysis of the data, and related conclusions. It then discusses the strengths and limitations of the research, which form a basis for proposing further research to be undertaken in this area. Finally, the article discusses the ways in which the results and insights gained from this study

might help schools, teachers and communities to understand what motivates ESOL students and how this knowledge could be used.

## **Literature review**

### **Motivation and learning a second language**

Motivation has been described as the ‘drive’ within human beings to achieve an objective (Harmer 2007, Rogers 2002), or as behaviour ‘directed by a goal’ (Rogers 2002), i.e. “(a) learner’s attitude, desire, interest in and willingness to invest effort in learning a second language” (Richards & Rodgers 2014: 28). Cook (2001: 115) states that teachers view motivation as “the interest that something generates in the learners”.

Several forms of motivation have been identified in previous literature, including instrumental (Cook 2001, Ellis 1997), integrative (Ur 2012, Hedge 2002, Ellis 1997, Cook 2001, Masgoret & Gardner 2003), resultative (Ellis 1997), intrinsic (Harmer 2013, Rogers 2002, Ellis 1997) and extrinsic (Harmer 2013, Rogers 2002). While intrinsic motivation is determined by internal factors, or feelings, towards a particular learning task or interest (Harmer 2013, Rogers 2002, Ellis 1997), extrinsic motivation is influenced by external factors, e.g. examinations, rewards or the individuals/institutions involved in the process of learning (Harmer 2013, Rogers 2002).

Motivation in L2 has been perceived as a need, or obligation, encouraging learning (Rogers 2002), i.e. it is one of the crucial “attributes learners bring to language learning” (Richards & Rogers 2014: 28). Ur (2012: 10) believes that “motivation is a crucial factor in successful language learning”. Similarly, Hedge (2000: 23) opines, “motivation is of crucial importance in the classroom, whether learners arrive with it or whether they acquire it through classroom experiences”. Ellis (1997: 75) notes that motivation in L2 involves “attitudes and affective states that influence the degree of effort that learners make to learn an L2”. Harmer (2013) claims such attitudes are further influenced by a number of factors; i.e. the importance of L2 outside the classroom, whether a language is part of the curriculum, and any positive or negative associations. In addition, Cook (2001: 115) perceives associations as “long-term stable attitudes in the learners’ minds”, particularly highlighting the roles of integrative and instrumental motivation. Hedge (2000) suggests that two forms of motivation may be responsible for successful English learning, as some learners might need a language for a particular reason, e.g. to further their studies, or perform effectively within an English speaking company, or simply to integrate into English speaking culture.

### **How can integrating into a target language culture motivate learners to learn a second language?**

Cook (2001) believes the greater a learner’s admiration for English speaking culture; the more successful they are in the English classroom. This can be observed in Canada, where English speakers are motivated to learn French to appreciate another culture, make friends, and participate in community events, etc. (Hedge 2000).

Masgoret and Gardner (2003) believe an integratively motivated learner is one with a genuine interest in the target language and culture. Cook (2001) believes that both instrumental and integrative motivation are essential to L2 learning, and can help L2 learners to succeed. Ellis (1997: 75) claims those “learners who experience success in learning may become more, or in some cases less, motivated to learn”.

This research study aimed to discover if these findings could be replicated in the context of ESOL students at a college in Scotland. The study that was conducted in New College Lanarkshire in November 2015 involved a group of students on various levels of ESOL courses. The study examines the relationship between motivation and English language learning and whether integrating with English speaking society can motivate ESOL learners to learn the English language. The study also attempts to identify factors that influence the learners’ motivation to integrate with the host country.

## **Methodology**

### **The learners/participants**

The participants consisted of 44 students studying ESOL at New College Lanarkshire. An email with a link to a questionnaire inviting all ESOL students to take part in the study and providing information about the study was sent to all ESOL lecturers who then passed the invitation and provided further information about the study to their students. New College Lanarkshire is a college based on the outskirts of Glasgow with a relatively long history of providing English language classes to local community members. Of the respondents, 36 were based on college campuses nearby and eight of whom were based in a local community centre. In addition, 34 were female and ten male. All the respondents were local residents, who had settled in Scotland for reasons related to work, family or study. The majority (31) had been living in Scotland for two years or more. Their ages ranged from 18 to 55 and over. The participants were of diverse nationalities and educational backgrounds, and their English language levels ranged from beginner (Scottish National 2) to lower advanced (Scottish Higher). Their highest levels of educational attainment ranged from secondary school to Master’s level.

### **Data collection and analysis**

I first developed a semi-structured questionnaire for use by beginner, intermediate and advanced learners of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). I decided to design an online questionnaire to be able to gather as many responses as possible from the ESOL learners. The questionnaire was available on Survey Gizmo, a popular survey platform, which respondents could access via the link that was sent in my initial email. The collected data provides information about students’ learning experiences and the role of integrative motivation. The questions were designed according to a five point Likert scale, with options ranging through strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree to not applicable. A space for additional comments was added at the end of the questionnaire to enable the learners to express additional views and opinions. The questionnaire asked the participants whether they feel motivated to learn English and whether they feel part of and admire the English speaking society they are currently living in, and if integrating with the society

motivates them to learn English. It then asks how they feel about their English, whether they are worried about speaking English outside the classroom and the reasons for learning the language. Forty-four participants completed the questionnaire via a web link, and their responses were recorded between September and November 2015. To make sure that all participants understand the questions, I strived to use clear English avoiding complex vocabulary and grammar; additionally, in my email, I encouraged the participants to contact me and seek help if they have problems in understanding the content.

The main findings from the study were generated by the 44 respondents using the online survey 'Survey Gizmo' (i.e. descriptive statistics and graphs). The results were generated as descriptive statistics and graphed information which I then downloaded into a Word document for analysis and I included in the study. I carefully analysed the quantitative data presented in tables, graphs and read and analysed the participants' comments in order to obtain qualitative data.

## Results

### General motivation to learn English

The results of the strongly agree/agree responses (Figure 1) reveal the vast majority of learners (93%) were generally motivated to learn English.

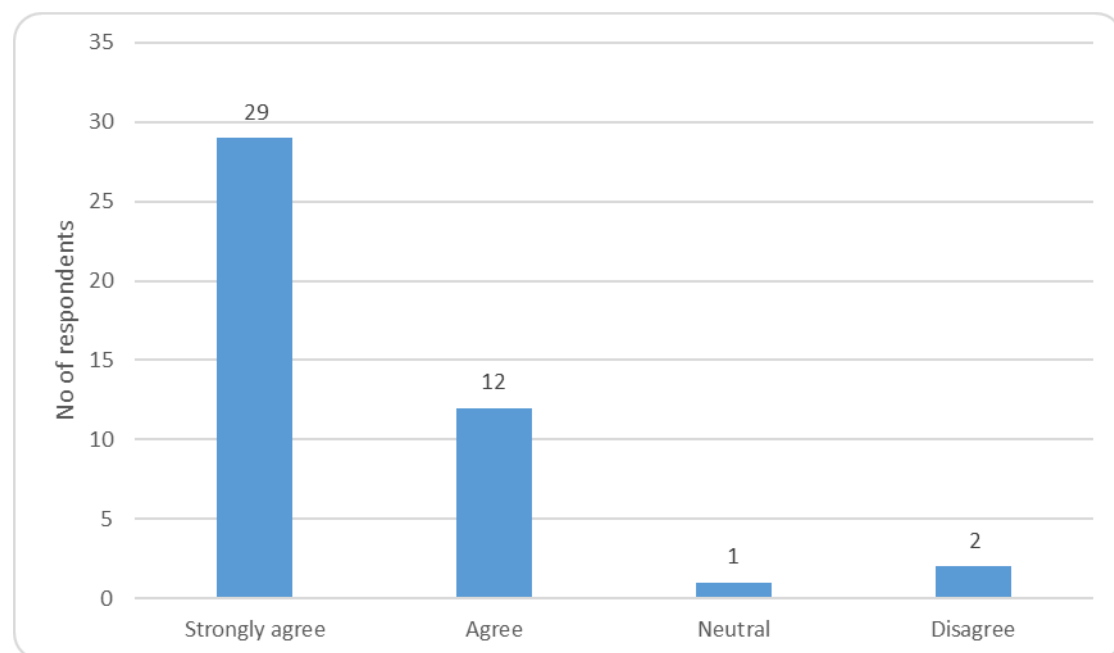


Figure 1: I am motivated to learn English

## Reasons for learning English

In order to obtain additional information concerning motivation, I analysed the data obtained from the questionnaire (see Table 1), which shows that the majority (95%) wished to learn English to improve their communication with English speakers, and to improve their understanding of the media, i.e. TV, radio and the press. A further 91% wanted to learn English to be accepted and respected as members of English speaking society. While, 89% wished to learn English to make friends from different countries. A further 86% chose to learn the language to understand the culture and life of English speaking society, and 82% needed the language to participate in local activities and events.

Table 1: I want to learn English to:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Responses
Understand the culture and life of English speaking people better	<b>35 %</b> 15	<b>51 %</b> 22	<b>7 %</b> 3	<b>2 %</b> 1	<b>5 %</b> 2	43
Better communicate with people who speak English	<b>61 %</b> 27	<b>34 %</b> 15	<b>0 %</b> 0	<b>0 %</b> 0	<b>5 %</b> 2	44
Make friends with people from many different countries	<b>33 %</b> 14	<b>56 %</b> 24	<b>5 %</b> 2	<b>2 %</b> 1	<b>5 %</b> 2	43
Understand TV, Radio programmes and the Press better	<b>42 %</b> 18	<b>51 %</b> 22	<b>0 %</b> 0	<b>2 %</b> 1	<b>5 %</b> 2	43
Take part in local activities and events	<b>42 %</b> 18	<b>40 %</b> 17	<b>12 %</b> 5	<b>0 %</b> 0	<b>7 %</b> 3	43
Become part of the English speaking society	<b>44 %</b> 19	<b>47 %</b> 20	<b>2 %</b> 1	<b>2 %</b> 1	<b>5 %</b> 2	43
To be respected by the English speaking society	<b>56 %</b> 24	<b>35 %</b> 15	<b>2 %</b> 1	<b>2 %</b> 1	<b>5 %</b> 2	43
To be accepted by the English speaking society	<b>58 %</b> 25	<b>33 %</b> 14	<b>2 %</b> 1	<b>2 %</b> 1	<b>5 %</b> 2	43

## Education and motivation

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire (see Tables 2 and 3) concerning the education and language levels of the participants was considered to determine whether there were links between these factors and their motivation to learn English. The strongly agree/agree responses (see Table 2) revealed that those students who have achieved a secondary level of education, or who hold a Diploma in Higher Education, were the most motivated to learn English.

Table 2: The relationship between motivation to learn English and participants' (n=16) education

I am motivated to learn English						
	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?						
Secondary school	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
Post-secondary school	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	
Technical school/college	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
College	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>
	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
Diploma of Higher Education	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
Bachelors / Ordinary Degree/ Graduate Diploma/ Graduate Certificate	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	

Integrated Masters Degree /	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Masters Degree/ Post Graduate	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
Diploma/ Post Graduate						
Certificate						
Total	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>
	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

The most motivated learners were those with intermediate and upper-intermediate levels of English. One pre-intermediate level student did not feel motivated, while another one was unsure (Table 3).

Table 3: The relationship between motivation to learn English language and participants' (n=16) language levels

What is your current English language level?						
	<b>Advanced/H igher/C1</b>	<b>Upper- Intermediate /National 5/B2</b>	<b>Intermediate /National 4/B1</b>	<b>Pre- Intermediate /National 3/A2</b>	<b>Beginn er/Nati onal 2/A1</b>	<b>Total</b>
I am motivated to learn English						
Agree	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>
	75.0%	75.0%	100.0%	71.4%	0.0%	
Neutral	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	



Disagree	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	
Strongly disagree	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
Total	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>
	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

### **Learners' comments about motivation**

In order to gain additional insights into the relationship between motivation and second language learning, the qualitative data obtained from the questionnaire (i.e. the learners' comments) was considered.

All three respondents expressed the importance of learning English, and different motivators, including everyday life, family, and career. One learner stated:

*I learn English because English is the key of everyday life and everything. (S1)*

Another wished to learn English for family reasons:

*I want to provide a good example for my daughter! (S2)*

One learner believed learning English furthers career goals:

*Learning English will help me achieve my career goals in the UK. (S3)*

Thus, the responses from the questionnaire demonstrate that the vast majority of learners were motivated to learn English to communicate with English speakers, understand TV, radio or the press, and receive respect and acceptance from members of English speaking society. They also believe that learning L2 will help them to succeed in their everyday lives and/or careers. However, as observed by Harmer (2007), L2 learners' motivation might also be influenced by the approval of family members, friends and peers. The desire of one of the respondents to be a good example to his daughter is consistent with the above belief. These findings are consistent with both integrative and instrumental motivation, i.e. learners wish to learn L2 for both educational and personal reasons (Ellis 1997, Cook 2001).

### **Motivation and integration**

The strongly agree/agree responses (Figure 2) revealed that the vast majority of learners (95%) believed that integrating with English speaking society motivates them to learn English, while only 5% were unsure.

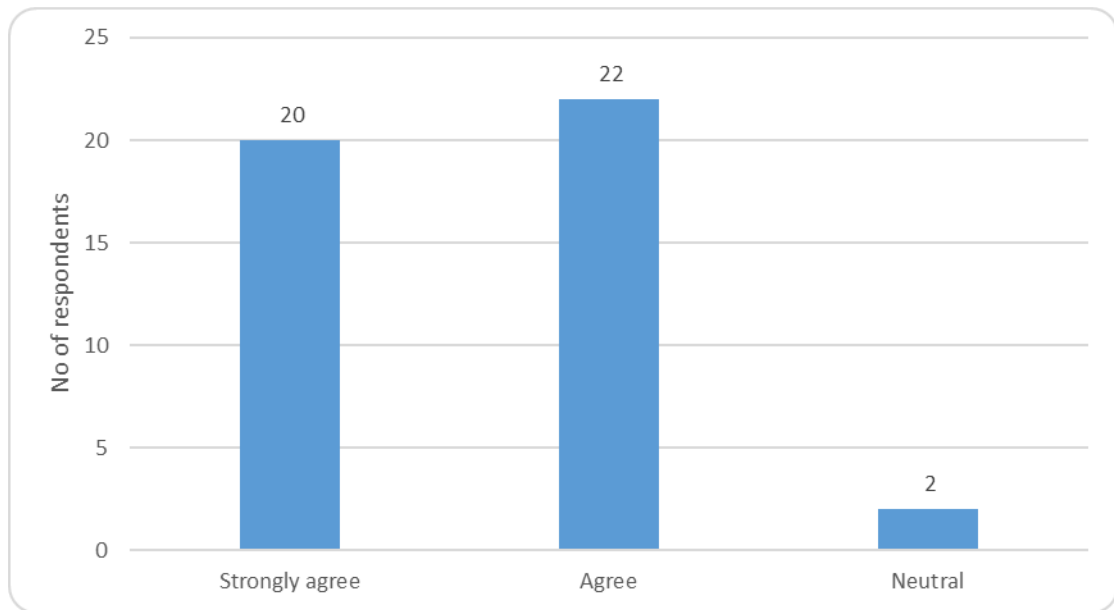


Figure 2. Integrating with English speaking society motivates me to learn English

### Feeling part of the society where you live

The strongly agreed/agree responses to survey question 11 (Figure 3) demonstrate that the majority (75%) report feeling part they were part of the English speaking society in which they live, 20% are unsure, while only 5% disagree.

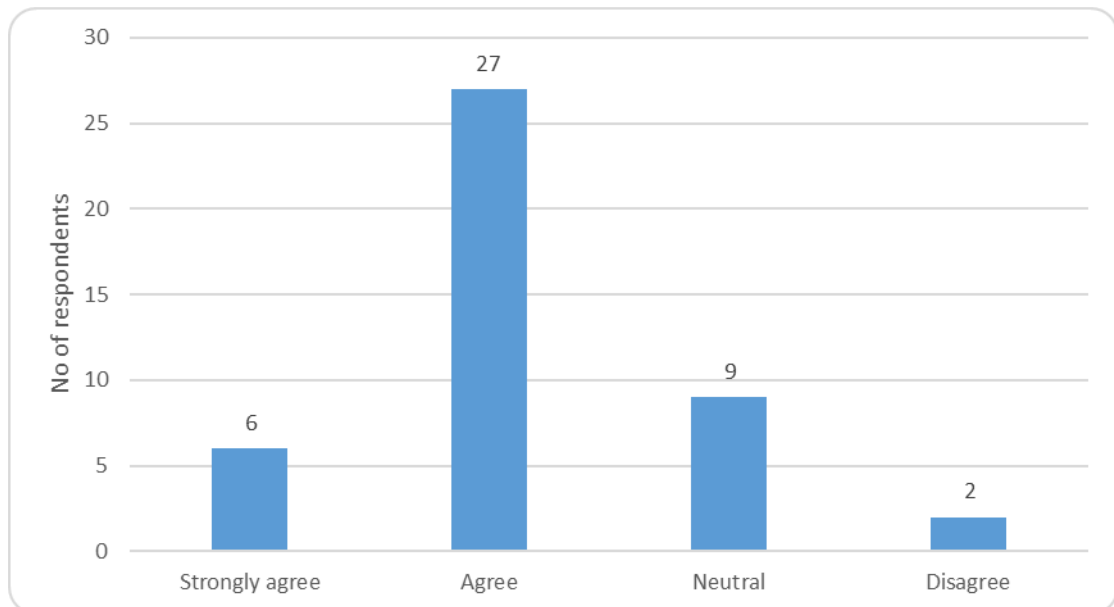


Figure 3. I feel part of the English speaking society I am currently living in.

## Employment and motivation

In order to understand which groups perceived integration as a motivation, the responses on motivation to integrate with the English speaking society was cross-referenced with the data on participants' occupations (Table 4). The strongly agree/agree responses reveal that the highest agreement is among the unemployed and students, however, other job categories also showed that integrating with the English speaking society motivates them to learn English, which may suggest that there may not be any clear links between motivation and what they do.

Table 4: The relationship between participants' jobs and the aspect of being motivated by integrating with the English speaking society

<b>Integrating with the English speaking society motivates me to learn English.</b>						
Which of the following best describe your current job function?	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
Administration / Clerical / Reception	0 0.0%	1 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 100%
Arts/Leisure / Entertainment	0 0.0%	1 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 100%
Beauty / Fashion	0 0.0%	1 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 100%
Distribution	0 0.0%	1 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 100%
Health Care (Physical & Mental)	0 0.0%	2 66.7%	1 33.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	3 100%
Operations / Logistics	0 0.0%	2 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	2 100%
Production	0 0.0%	2 100.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	2 100%

Restaurant / Food service	0	1	0	0	0	1
	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Science / Technology / Programming	0	1	0	0	0	1
	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Student	0	3	0	0	0	3
	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Unemployed	0	5	0	0	0	5
	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Other - Write In: Au-pair (1), gardener (1),housekeeper (1).	0	2	1	0	0	3
	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>24</b>

### Language competence and motivation

To gain additional insights into whether they felt the language they acquire in class is sufficient to communicate outside the classroom, the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire was considered. The disagree/strongly disagree responses revealed half of respondents were unconcerned about speaking English outside the classroom, 25% were concerned, and only 23% were unsure (Figure 4).

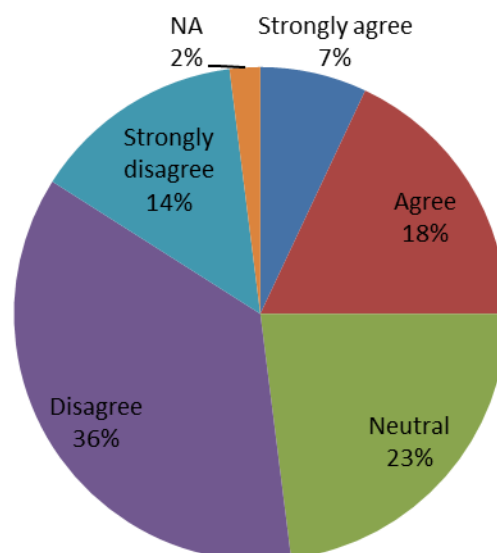


Figure 4: I worry about speaking English outside of class.

It is notable that the majority (70%) arrived in the UK two or more years ago (Figure 5), and therefore might already be well settled and familiar with the culture and, therefore, they might be less daunted when needing to communicate in English. However, it is unknown whether those who are not worried about their spoken English outside the classroom are confident speakers and whether they might still be worried about their lack of proficiency in English.

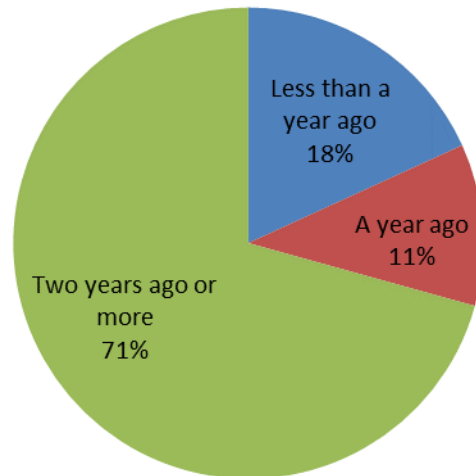


Figure 5: When did you come to Scotland?

### **Admiration for English speaking culture**

In order to investigate whether they admire English speaking culture, I analysed the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire (Figure 6). The strongly agree/disagree responses demonstrated that the majority (64%) admired British culture, with only 4% disagreeing and 23% reporting that they were unsure.

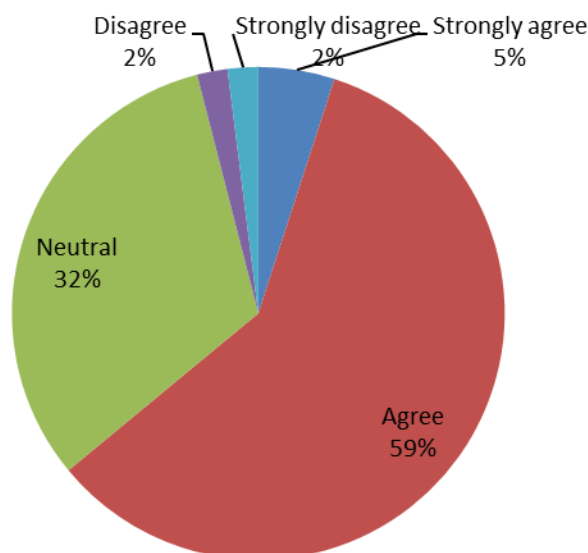


Figure 6: I admire the British culture.

### **Learners' comments on their worries about proficiency outside the classroom**

In order to better understand why English language learners who study their English in an English speaking country may be more or less motivated to integrate, I considered the students' comments. One participant stated:

*I want to play an active role in our society. (S4)*

Another participant expressed concerns about learning the language while living in an English speaking country, and in particular the difficulties of understanding the Scottish accent.

*Speaking English (especially Scottish English) is very difficult and sometimes I sense a barrier, something that stops me from talking to people. I think it is easier to speak to people when abroad, because their accent is more understandable. (S5)*

In conclusion, the results of the questionnaire revealed that the overwhelming majority of learners were motivated by the desire to integrate into English speaking culture. These findings are consistent with the views reported by Cook (2001), Ur (2012) and Ellis (1997), who found a desire to integrate into the target culture can motivate learners to learn an L2. The learners expressing this view were from many different work sectors and language levels, and only expressed concerns with regard to language barriers and accents when communicating in L2, which then suggested that a learner might feel less motivated by difficulties in understanding different accents. The results revealed that the majority of learners believed the most effective place to learn L2 is the classroom; thus, suggesting motivation is acquired (or improved) through a successful classroom experience (Hedge 2000).

The majority of the respondents claimed that they admired their L2 culture, felt part of Scottish society and wished to be actively involved in it. These findings are consistent with integrative motivation, which is informed by whether an individual identifies with, or rejects a target culture (Cook 2001, Ellis 1997, Masgoret & Gardner 2003).

## **Discussion**

The results suggest the majority of learners were motivated to learn English to improve their communication with English speakers, and to take an active role in various aspects of life in Scotland (Schellekens 2007). A considerable majority expressed their desire to learn about, and integrate with, English speaking culture (Cook 2001, Ellis 1997, Ur 2012), (i.e. being able to socialise with nationalities living in Britain), which suggests integrative motivation plays an important role in their L2 learning. A vast majority of them indicated the English classroom as the most effective place to learn English, which suggests that they may be highly motivated to learn their second language through a successful classroom experience (Hedge, 2000).

The respondents reported a number of reasons for learning L2, including to find a job or apply for a college/university course. One learner reported being influenced by a family member. These findings indicate that, in some cases, instrumental motivation plays a part in learning L2 (Hedge 2000, Cook 2001, Ur 2012, Rogers 2002).

The major limitation in this study was that all the participants were drawn from a single college in Scotland. Future studies should engage a larger, and more diverse, group of learners from many different colleges across Scotland, community members as well as teachers able to give additional insights to the research. They should also employ carefully developed resources that take into consideration different language proficiencies of participants and include more aspects of motivation in order to obtain valuable data and results that are more meaningful, e.g., to determine if integrative motivation is the main motivator or whether other motivators are as or more important. It would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study or seek feedback from ESOL learners from the day they arrive in the UK, and then over a period of time throughout their ESOL studies to see how their motivation changes, develops, and to determine which factors influence their integrative motivation, both inside, and outside of, the language classroom.

The response from both participants and ESOL lecturers who helped me with recruiting participants for the study was very positive. All participants completed the online questionnaire and answered all the required questions, thus producing rapid and valuable results, while the lecturers valued the opportunity to obtain more information about their students, in particular, what motivates them to learn English.

Research has demonstrated that motivation is a highly complex phenomenon (Hedge 2000), consisting of many 'variables'. It would, therefore, be useful to gather as much data as possible about the factors that motivate English language students to study in an English speaking country and whether integration is the main of one of many motivators to do that. The knowledge could then be used by schools, teachers and communities to enhance learners' motivation to improve their chance of success in

their English language learning, and by doing so helping them to integrate into British society.

Undoubtedly, the aspect of integrative motivation in second language learning is complex and needs to be investigated independently from variables such as expectations, e.g. to what extent learners need to integrate with the L2 society, or which particular skills they wish to develop. Therefore, additional studies in a variety of contexts need to be undertaken before reaching a definitive conclusion. However, as this study offers support for the findings of previous researchers, this to some extent offers the benefit of increasing not only its own validity and reliability, but also that of other researchers.

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## **Biodata**

**Jolanta Hudson** is an English for Academic Study (EAS) tutor at the University of Glasgow. Before coming to Glasgow in August 2016, she was a lecturer in ESOL at New College Lanarkshire, Coatbridge.

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